

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
SAJ-01 ACDA-07 BIB-01 SCA-01 CU-02 VO-03 DHA-02
TRSE-00 /092 W
-----250156Z 026789 /64

R 241643Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3412
INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USIA WASHDC
USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 1091

USIA FOR IOP, IBS, IPS, IEU

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, CSCE, UR, US, IS
SUBJECT: DEFENSIVE SOVIET ANTI-ZIONIST PROPAGANDA

1. SUMMARY: SOVIET DEFENSIVENESS IN MATTERS CONCERNING SOVIET JEWRY AND JEWISH (AS WELL AS OTHER) EMIGRATION IS CLEAR FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH THE HEAD OF OVIR AND FROM A LONG TV DOCUMENTARY SHOWN ON JANUARY 22. SUCH EFFORTS, AIMED BOTH AT A DOMESTIC AND A FOREIGN AUDIENCE, MAY WELL CONTINUE AS THE BELGRADE REVIEW CONFERENCE APPROACHES. SOME OF OUR JEWISH SOURCES ARE QUITE CONCERNED OVER THE DOCUMENTARY. END SUMMARY.

2. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. THE TASS ENGLISH WIRE JANUARY 20 CARRIED AN INTERVIEW WITH VLADMIR OBIDIN, HEAD OF THE ALL-UNION OVIR, CONCERNING SOVIET POLICY BOTH ON VISITS TO THE USSR AND EMIGRATION FROM IT. OBIDIN PLACES SOVIET EMIGRATION POLICY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CSCE FINAL ACT, AND NOTES THAT THE SOVIET UNION IS "ONE OF THE MOST FREQUENTLY VISITED COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD." HE
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COMMENTS THAT PROCEDURES FOR VISITING THE USSR HAVE BEEN EASED, THAT "PRIVILEGES FOR TRAVEL IN SOVIET TERRITORY HAVE BEEN INTRODUCED FOR FOREIGN JOURNALISTS," AND THAT "PRESSMEN AND CERTAIN CATEGORIES OF FOREIGN SPECIALISTS ARE ISSUED MULTIPLE ENTRY AND EXIT VISAS."

3. MOVING ON TO SOVIET EMIGRATION POLICY, OBIDIN FLATLY STATES

THAT FAMILY REUNION IS THE ONLY BASIS FOR ISSUING EXIT PERMISSION, AND THAT MOST REQUESTS COME FROM JEWS. HE ASSERTS THAT OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS 98.4 PERCENT OF THOSE WHO APPLIED TO LEAVE THE USSR HAD THEIR APPLICATIONS GRANTED. POSSESSING KNOWLEDGE OF STATE SECRETS WAS THE ONLY CAUSE FOR DENIAL. THIS "IN NO WAY CONTRADICTS THE INTERNATIONAL PACT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS." OBIDIN SAYS THAT THE NUMBER OF JEWS "WILLING" (SIC) TO LEAVE THE USSR IS DIMINISHING; IN 1975 THERE WAS ONLY ONE-THIRD THE NUMBER FOR 1973. OBIDIN CRITICIZES THE PRACTICE OF SENDING FALSE BYZOV'S TO THE USSR, NOTING THAT RECEIPIENTS OF SUCH DOCUMENTS OFTEN SEND THEM TO THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR "EXPRESSING INDIGNATION" AT THOSE WHO SENT THEM. OBIDIN COMMENTS THAT THIS PRACTICE IS NOT THE RESULT OF A PRIVATE INITIATIVE, BUT OF A POLICY DECISION BY THE "TEL AVIV LEADERS."

4. OBIDIN ALSO DISCUSSES SOVIET CITIZENS WHO MARRY FOREIGNERS. HE ADMITS THAT MARRIAGE TO A FOREIGNER IS A VALID REASON TO LEAVE THE USSR, ADDING THAT SOVIETS MARRIED TO FOREIGNERS NOW LIVE IN MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED COUNTRIES. OBIDIN NOTES, HOWEVER, THAT MANY SOVIET CITIZENS MARRIED TO FOREIGNERS DO NOT WISH TO LEAVE THE USSR "ALTHOUGH THEY HAVE EVERY OPPORTUNITY OF DOING SO."

5. THE OBIDIN INTERVIEW WAS CARRIED IN A SOMEWHAT EXPANDED FORM IN IZVESTIYA, JANUARY 22, UNDER THEN HEADING: "SOAP BUBBLES AND REAL FACTS". IT PLACES THE INTERVIEW IN THE CONTEXT OF A SOVIET JEW WHO, HAVING EMIGRATED FROM THE USSR, HAS COMMITTED SUICIDE IN ITALY BECAUSE OF THE HOPELESSNESS OF HIS SITUATION AND PARTICULARLY BECAUSE OF THE DIFFICULTY OF FINDING WORK. THE POINTS THAT OBIDIN MADE IN THE ENGLISH VERSION OF THE INTERVIEW

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ARE AMPLIFIED, FOR INSTANCE, WITH EXAMPLES QUOTED OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE COMPLAINED ABOUT RECEIVING FALSE VYZOV'S. ONE POINT THAT THE ENGLISH VERSION OF THE INTERVIEW DOES NOT MAKE CONCERNS THE FACT THAT MANY WOULD-BE EMIGRANTS (SEVERAL ARE NAMED, INCLUDING TWO LEADING MOSCOW REFUSENIKS) LEAVING OSTENSIBLY TO JOIN THEIR FAMILIES, IN FACT HAVE CLOSER RELATIVES IN THE USSR THAN THEY DO IN ISRAEL. A SECOND POINT NOT COVERED IN THE ENGLISH VERSION DISCUSSES THOSE JEWS WHO, FED UP WITH CONDITIONS IN ISRAEL, ARE REPORTEDLY SEEKING TO RETURN TO THE USSR. HERE TOO SEVERAL SPECIFIC EXAMPLES ARE QUOTED.

6. SOVIET TV SHOWED ON JANUARY 22 THE PREMIERE OF A DOCUMENTARY FILM ON THE JEWISH QUESTION. CARRIED ON THE MAIN CHANNEL, THE 65-MINUTE FILM IS CALLED "SOUL BUYERS" (SKUPSHCHIKI DUSH). THE FILM, TECHNICALLY QUITE WELL DONE, COVERED MOST OF THE THEMES DEAR TO SOVIET PROPAGANDISTS: THE PROBLEMS WHICH SOVIET JEWS WHO LEAVE THE USSR FACE IN ISRAEL AND ELSEWHERE IN THE WEST; THE LACK OF PROBLEMS FOR SOVIET JEWS IN THE USSR; THE MACHINATIONS OF WESTERN JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS; THE EVILS OF ISRAELI TERRITORIAL

AGGRESSION AGAINST THE DEFENSELESS ARABS; AND THE UNITED NATIONS
CONDEMNATION OF ISRAEL.

7. LIKE OBIDIN IN HIS INTERVIEW, THE FILM PUTS ZIONISM AND THE
SLANDEROUS ACTIVITIES OF ZIONISTS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE HELSINKI
FINAL ACT. THUS, SEVERAL FOREIGNERS WERE SHOWN WHO WERE FOUND IN
VIOLATION OF SOVIET LAW WHILE IN THE USSR. TWO YOUNG AMERICAN
TOURISTS APOLOGIZED FOR VIOLATING SOVIET LAWS. ONE WAS QUOTED AS
LINKING THE JEWISH ORGANIZATION WHICH HAD BACKED HIM WITH THE CIA
AND FBI. THERE WAS ALSO SOME FOOTAGE ON THE EXTRA-ATHLETIC
ACTIVITIES OF THE (FEW) ISRAELI SPORTS TEAMS ADMITTED TO THE USSR
IN RECENT YEARS. THE U.S. GOVERNMENT'S POLICY WAS ALSO CRITICIZED,
AND CONGRESSMAN YATES WAS MENTIONED BY NAME, AND HIS PICTURE SHOWN.

8. THE DOCUMENTARY FILM GAVE A GOOD DEAL OF ATTENTION TO THE PROCESS
BY WHICH SOVIET JEWS EMIGRATE. THERE WAS A SCENE OF A JEW BEING
RECEIVED AT AN OVIR OFFICE - AND THE OFFICIAL COMMENTING THAT
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EMIGRATION MEANT LOSS OF CITIZENSHIP, SOME SHOTS OF THE TRAIN TAKING
A FAMILY TO VIENNA, THE WELCOME BY HIAS AND OTHER ZIONIST ORGANIZAT-
IONS
THERE, AND THEN THE WELCOME IN ISRAEL. THE FILM HAD A LOT OF
FOOTAGE ON THE PROBLEM OF UNSOLICITED VYZOV'S. SEVERAL JEWS WERE SHOWN

PROTESTING TO THE AUTHORITIES THE FACT THAT THEY HAD RECEIVED
SUCH VYZOV'S FROM NON-EXISTENT RELATIVES. ALL THIS WAS PLACED
IN THE CONTEXT OF A WELL-THOUGHT-OUT POLICY OF THE ISRAELI
GOVERNMENT. END UNCLASSIFIED

9. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL: COMMENT: THE OBIDIN INTERVIEW IS
IMPORTANT BECAUSE OF THE AUTHORITATIVE NATURE OF THE SOURCE.
IT IS ALSO INTERESTING THAT THE INTERVIEW IS DESIGNED FOR BOTH
DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN COVERAGE, ALTHOUGH WE ASSUME THAT THE
PRIMARY AUDIENCE WAS THE DOMESTIC ONE. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE
INTERVIEW IS POINTED UP BY THE FACT THAT IT APPEARED IN THE
ALL-UNION IZVESTIYA, WHILE THE TIMING OF THE IZVESTIYA PIECE
WAS PROBABLY DESIGNED TO COINCIDE WITH THE NATIONWIDE SHOWING
OF THE FILM ON THE SAME EVENING.

10. WHILE PRESS ATTACKS ON THE "ZIONISTS" ARE FAIRLY COMMON, THE
FILM IS UNUSUAL BOTH FOR ITS RELATIVE SOPHISTICATION AND FOR THE
FACT THAT IT BRINGS A WHOLE SERIES OF SOVIET CONCERNS INTO A SINGLE,
CLEAR FOCUS. WE HAVE NOT RECENTLY SEEN IN SOVIET MEDIA SUCH EXPLICIT
LINKAGE OF THEIR CONCERNS OVER SOVIET JEWRY WITH THE HELSINKI FINAL
ACT. WE WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED TO SEE THE LINKAGE BEING MADE AGAIN
IN SOVIET PROPAGANDA EFFORTS AS THE BELGRADE REVIEW CONFERENCE NEARS.
NOR HAVE WE SEEN ELSEWHERE COMPARABLE EMPHASIS ON THE AMERICAN
ASPECT OF THE PROBLEM. THE FILM'S STRESS ON WESTERN FINANCIAL AND
MORAL SUPPORT FOR SOVIET JEWRY ALSO WAS UNUSUALLY HEAVY.

11. MOSCOW JEWISH SOURCES ARE REPORTEDLY QUITE CONCERNED OVER THE DOCUMENTARY AND WHAT IT MIGHT MEAN. THEY ARE LESS CONCERNED, WE ARE TOLD, ABOUT THE IZVESTIYA PIECE. A DISSIDENT SOURCE (APPARENTLY FOREWARNED ABOUT THE SHOWING) BROUGHT THE FILM TO CONFIDENTIAL

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EMBOFF'S ATTENTION AND TERMED IT "AN IMPORTANT ATTACK". ANOTHER SOURCE FEELS THAT THE INTENSITY OF THE ATTACKS ON SOVIET JEWS WHO RECEIVE SUPPORT FROM FOREIGN TRAVELERS IS A SIGN OF A COMING CRACKDOWN ON SUPPORT ATTEMPTS BY WESTER TOURISTS AS WELL AS ON THE LOCAL RECIPIENTS OF THIS SUPPORT. HE ALSO SEES THE EXTENSIVE COVERAGE GIVEN TO THE QUESTION OF UNSOLICITED VYZOVS AS PERHAPS HERALDING A CRACKDOWN IN THIS FIELD AS WELL.
TOON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: COLLECTIVE SECURITY, PROPAGANDA, PRESS CONFERENCES, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, TRAVEL CONTROLS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 24-Jan-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977MOSCOW01091
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770025-1110
Format: TEL
From: MOSCOW
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770124/aaaaaviy.tel
Line Count: 189
Litigation Code IDs:
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Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 981d2bd2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3522113
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DEFENSIVE SOVIET ANTI-ZIONIST PROPAGANDA
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, SOPN, UR, US, IS, CSCE, (OBIDIN, VLADMIR)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/981d2bd2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009